SPRAYSOF WESTERN PINE



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Sprays of Western Pine

BY

ISABEL R, VON EBERTZ

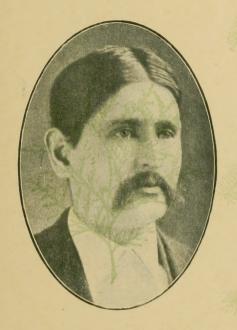
I. R. van Hertz

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To a Western Pioneer



THE LATE W. H. HOOPER

of Winnipeg, Brandon, Vancouver and Edmonton.



"The Pine, plunging headlong down the steep, Passed into the being of a man."

-Metempsychosis of the Pine

PREFACE

BY "THE AUTHOR"

An illustration of one of Lord Lytton's poems represents a mortal of grave aspect, standing with his iron spade, beside a pyramid of sand—at his feet a river.

Underneath are the words:

"For each man thinks his own sand house secure."

These lines represent the sadness and futility of human effort, undirected.

We are enjoined, however, to set our feet upon a rock—which, it is hoped will be the good opinion and support of the great City of Winnipeg.

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OLD TIMES IN THE WEST

"Would I meet a lady from London, who was visiting in Winnipeg?"

"With pleasure."

Several cups of the beverage that "cheers but not inebriates," accompanied by our hostess' famous chicken sandwiches, gave us the necessary inspiration, and the conversation turned to old-times, and old-timers. Said the Englishwoman, leaning forward so that the flames of the cheerful grate fire played upon her keen, intelligent countenance, and speaking with that clear incisiveness characteristic of the English, her tones alive with humor: "I never hear that expression in Winnipeg but to be transfixed with astonishment. You know, in my country"—the "my" heavily accented—"we use that name to describe a person who has served many terms in prison. It amuses me immensely every time I hear it."

The remark passed unnoticed by her other auditors, and I here transcribe it for the benefit of my readers. For myself, I shall never again hear the words "Old-Timer in Winnipeg" without recalling the observant Englishwoman's remark.

THE CANADIAN GIRL WHO LIVED ON GRASS

She had just returned from a trip by rail. steamboat and stage to the erstwhile town of Fort Steele, British Columbia. This was "many moons ago," and Fort Steele is now no more, having moved on to meet the railway, with that adaptability that characterizes all things Western. She related to me an incident of the homeward journey over the Canadian Pacific Railway: An old-timer, a friend of mine, somewhat uninstructed, although her husband was an editor, always called it, in heavily-important tones, "The P.C.R."—and her listeners felt duly impressed. The Canadian girl had met en route an Italian and a Frenchman who, after the usual preliminaries customary among well-bred people, strangers to each other, had asked her to dine with them. Gazing out of the windows of the dining car at the ever-retreating and advancing oceans of grass, they exclaimed as in one breath: "What do the people live upon here? It must be grass! There is nothing to be seen but grass everywhere!"

A further item was the loss of the Canadian girl's watch, entailing a search of an hour and a half, in which the adventurers, as she had then suspected them to be, had joined, their endeavors resulting in complete success and the restoration of the lost watch to the Canadian girl, who felt somewhat "small" over her suspicions.

She arrived in Winnipeg in due time and informed her mother of their intention to call, resulting in considerable bustling on that good lady's part—and a conversation with me respecting their identity. "Didn't they give you their visiting

cards?" said I. She answered that they had done so, but she had been unable to read them, and produced them forthwith:

LUIGI MAZZINI.

Ambassadeur, plenipotentiare et envoy extraordinaire de la cour de Siam.



COUNT ANGELO VALENTINIS

"Eva! Didn't you know what that meant? Why, one is the Italian ambassador at the court of Siam, and the French count in his attaché!" But there was no time for discussion, for promptly at three the door-bell rang and I could hear voices in the little drawing-room. Descending later by special request from Eva, who rushed in, breathless, to inquire WHEN I was coming down. I made an entrance through the folding curtains separating the drawing-room and dining-room beyond. I took a quick survey of the two foreigners, unobserved, and never shall I forget the expression of surprise upon the countenance of the Italian as he perceived me. He turned to the Frenchman. whose features echoed his friend's astonishmentand it seemed to grow and expand upon the faces of both. The French nobleman was excessively polite, and bowed, pressing his hands together with every remark he made. He did all the talking, as Westerners say; observing which, I turned, addressing the Italian in French—and, finally including both, we had a spirited and interesting conversation. The Italian was short, heavily-built, with massive head, the forehead very broad. He was a type of statesman very different from those we see in the West—his whole personality breathing forth a forceful serenity and repose, to be most envied by the mercurial and excitable Westerners. The Frenchman was short and fair—an epitome of diplomatic and dignified politeness. In intervals they laughed and joked with the Canadian girl—quite different from the heavy state-liness bestowed on me.

But their visit came—like all good and unexpected things—too soon to an end, and lifting their glasses of wine to their lips they bowed to us all in true courtly fashion, while they drank a toast: "Here's to the Canadian Girl, Who Lives on Grass!"

And the door closed on them "for ever and aye"
—for we followed the prairie trails, while the ocean
track and the old lands claimed them.



THE CEDAR SWAMP

The "girls"—as everybody in the family called them—had arisen at four in the morning, and at six o'clock was heard the rattle of the old buckboard and Bill's hoofs as they started on their twenty-five-mile drive to Aweme. For Aweme—which name always reminds me of Hiawatha's wild goose, the Wa-wa, and doubtless it has much the same significance, as the word is Indian—had a school house, and Fanchon, who lived in Brandon, taught the school in the summer holidays.

The town trail led us up First Street, over the hill, past the Court House and out into the open, "winding o'er the prairie" as the old song, reminiscent of the West, says. To the right were the blue hills of Brandon, veiled in the morning mists—as blue, as far-off and as unattainable as the hopes of youth, vet ever-present at our side in anticipation or in memory. Here is an acre of nodding cone-flowers, so typical of Manitoba, with their bright vellow petals and brownishblack centres—then green stretches of prairie—a prosperous-looking farmhouse with stables more so, according to the Western idea and practice -sometimes a lonely house on a lonelier hill, from which descend fierce dogs who follow us and alarm even old Bill with prolonged howling-until we reach the old ferry at M---'s Crossing, where after repeated calls, a youthful rustic finally appears in answer and, working the rusty chain, slowly ferries us across the Assiniboine River. The flora in this spot seems to differ from that of other parts of Manitoba, and a cluster of little rose-yellow blossoms set in a thick bush of gravish-green leaves was gathered and carried away as a memento.

The crossing accomplished, the country grew wilder, the farms and houses fewer and fewer, until finally the sand strip was reached and wreaths



upon wreaths of ground cedar seemed to be the only vegetation. Even the cheery gopher, who follows in the wake of the wheat fields, deserted us, and as if all this desolation were not dismal enough, we suddenly espied on the trail in front of us-into which doubtless they had struck from some by-path—a pair of most villainous-looking foreigners, driving a rattling old buckboard behind a very bony horse. A name has never been found to stand for these foreigners in our imagination, and we have sometimes supposed them to be Roumanians, as Galicians were unknown at the time in Manitoba—with apologies to OTHER Roumanians. Bill, fortunately, was a slow traveller, and there was no difficulty in holding him back until the ill-favored strangers topped a hill and disappeared on the other side, hiding us from view; or in inducing him to take part in various other manoeuvres by means of which we were continually behind and out of sight of the fearinspiring travellers.

Suddenly an open stretch of prairie was reached, the trail turning and twisting like the sinuous curves of the Assiniboine River, and we halted for a time to allow the advance guard to cross the green desert. After a long wait we followed, when the driver, my sister, pointing to our right, exclaimed—"That is the cedar-swamp! The country people say it is haunted, and they will not pass it at night!" Some desolate scenes have met my gaze in the West, but none more so than the cedar Turning, one beheld an immense cupshaped hollow, set deep in the heart of the barren, sandy prairie; trees grew dark and green and thick making a kind of pall over the gruesome spot, which even the rays of the early morning sun could not disperse. Even pine-trees grew there, and gazing with the long and trained sight of the "prairie eye," so designated by the well-known western historian, the Rev. George Bryce, one could descry a solitary house.

"Had any one ever lived there?" In answer, my sister said that years ago, the country people related, a man and his wife had lived there and that the woman had been murdered. Only the screechowl of the prairies haunted the spot and, as we looked, a bright ray of sunlight struck the tops of the tallest trees and an eagle arose with a harsh scream, winging his way to upper airs. We have often passed the cedar swamp since that bright May morning long ago, but chiefly from the other side, and if the dusk of evening were falling, never without a feeling of awe and dread.

The way was without incident after this, and a turn in the road bringing us in view of the Aweme schoolhouse and its attendant circle of farms and houses, we gave our good "Shaganappi"—the Indian name for that particular slow variety of pony—the whip, and the rattling wheels of the old buckboard rang out a challenge to our unwelcome fellow-travellers who looked behind to see us at last—but too late.

THE BEND IN THE RIVER

There's a bend in the river,

The trees bending o'er,

And an old boat is moored to the green shady shore—

So the folks say

-Blumenthal.

It is the Assiniboine River of the Western prairies, with its thousand and one serpentine twistings and turnings—the far-famed river, whose name alone stands to remind us that once an Indian tribe of that name lived and roamed beside its waters.

"And I see in the distance melting,
In far-away shadowy lines,
The smoke of the hunting-lodges
Of the wild Assiniboines."

My mother had learnt the song in her childhood, but had never thought to dwell beside the river.

"The bend in the river"—which appeals to all of us! Is it because the grass there grows greenest, the sunshine is most golden, or the shadows are longest in the late afternoon? None may know. Perchance, because the turn hides from us the view beyond, down the river of Life where Time is slowly but relentlessly bearing us.

It is like the turn in the road, which means sometimes life, sometimes death—and anon leads us only to a deserted city of the heart.

"THE DESERTED CITY"

There lies a little city leagues away;
Its wharves the green sea washes all day long;
Its busy, sun-bright wharves with sailors' song
And clamour of trade ring loud the livelong day.
Into the happy harbor hastening gay
With press of snowy canvas, tall ships throng:
The peopled streets to blythe-eyed peace belong,
Glad-housed beneath these crowding roofs of
gray.

'Twas long ago, this city prospered so—
For yesterday a woman died therein:
Since when, the wharves are idle fallen, I know,
And in the streets is hushed the pleasant din:
The thronging ships have been, the songs have
been:
Since yesterday it is so long ago!

-C. D. Roberts, in the Century (of long ago).



A SUMMER AT GIMLI

"And 'midst the meadow's drenched grass
The feet of Summer swiftly pass,
'Stay! stay!' the yearning mountains cry.
'Stay! stay!' the drowsy grasses sigh.
But on and on the sweet guest flies,
With wind-blown hair and wide, still eyes,
On, on, until her eager feet
Abide, amid the yellow wheat."

There is a little park of pine-trees at Gimli—a small, Icelandic hamlet on Lake Winnipeg—, a quiet, secluded spot, most restful on a Sunday afternoon, where the warm sunshine, the faint stirring of pine branches and the strong, resinous, piney odor, help one to forget the far-away world and its noise and clamor. There is none like it in Manitoba, it is said. Just outside it, is an ever running fountain, one of the flowing wells to be found on every alternate corner of this old Government Town—and a sidewalk leads over the prairie down to the beach where the Winnipeg holiday-seekers sit and dream on the sands in the hot sunshine while the bathers and swimmers disport themselves with joyous shouts in the lake waters.

Far away to the right can be seen the Government dredge at work, bringing up sand from the lake depths and depositing it in the barges to be borne out to sea—for Lake Winnipeg is one of the largest of the inland seas of Canada. Sometimes, for days, the water is filled with a yellowishgreen slime which, we are told, is washed from the

shores of the distant islands, low down on the sky line. Usually the water is too rough—and considered unsafe—for boating by amateurs.

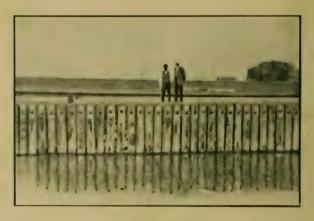
It is a full half-hour's walk back to the Lakeview Hotel through what appeared to be the main street of the sleepy little village, with its cottages, and tiny gardens blazing with poppies of all hues, dahlias, stocks and all the old-fashioned flowers, seldom seen now in the more formally laid out gardens of Winnipeg. We are not alone, however, for it is the fish-fly season, and hundreds of them fasten upon our dresses and the backs of our coats, for protection—even upon parasols and hair. The fish-fly, like the favorites of the gods, dies young: and while this is a matter for rejoicing we regret not having photographed the fish-fly in myriads, for no description would do that uncommon insect justice. He requires a whole paragraph for himself—an impossibility. A halt at the popular Barney's for tea in mid-Main Street enables us to reach home.

The Lakeview Hotel has a mascot—a dog owned by the proprietor, Mr. J. G. Christie, rejoicing in the patriotic appellation of "Roblin." Every morning—and afterwards twice daily—for the past ten or twelve years, "Roblin" has taken up his station on the front seat, beside the driver, who is quaintly named "Allie," and has driven to and from the pretty station, barking at all the dogs on the way.

Up the beach a little way is situated the Fresh Air Camp—a fine site in the heart of the grove, the water close by. Here come hundreds of little children from Winnipeg. We can see them going in to bathe every afternoon at three, looking like little black crows in the distance. One morning at six, a trainload was leaving for Winnipeg and quite plainly to the ear came the words of the parting chorus: "For They are Jolly Good

Fellows," and the finale, "God Save the King," the strains of which I heard also in an evening walk, from a very disreputable, tumble-down house, played on an old organ, and I thought—it all goes to make up Canada and Canadians—"God Save the King"—and the Queen.

On moonlight nights there is the walk down to the pier, to the old lighthouse. Here are two



typical Gimli residents standing on the pier. The old lighthouse is the resort of all Gimli, and of the holiday seekers, numerous names being cut upon its walls. This is a restful spot when the waters are quiet, and suitable to many diverse moods on stormy nights, when the waters roll in with a booming sound, dashing heavily against the old timbers of the pier only to fall back repulsed. Some day this will be a seaport of note—and Lake Winnipeg will be alive with ships bound for Norway House—and points north. There are now the infrequent calls of the north-bound passenger "The Mikado," and occasional light steamer. craft—schooners run by gasoline motors, motor boats, and sailboats managed by Indians bound for some unknown port, gliding silently into the harbor and slipping away into the mists like dream boats.



The Mikado of Winnipeg



VI

WATER-LILIES

They used to grow on the Napanee River at home, and none could be found in Manitoba. There was only the yellow water-lily, which floats on our lakes and ponds and sloughs—bright yellow, with a brown centre.

Flowers, music, and children are the remnants of Paradise left here upon earth. Some angel must have dropped the water-lily in a trance of forgetfulness, for it floats upon the waters in its robes of white and gold—a thing of perfect beauty, a veritable Queen of flowers.

In the old times at Rat Portage—now called Kenora, on the Lake of the Woods, Winnipeg's favorite summer resort—in the days when the "Edna Brydges" and the "Shamrock" used to make the trip across the Lake of the Woods, the Big Traverse, up Rainy River and Rainy Lake to Fort Frances—before the days of the C.N. Railway—someone brought into a small café at Rat Portage a large bouquet of water-lilies.

Unable to remove my rapt gaze from these reminders of Ontario, I was aroused by a voice at my elbow—the place was occupied by workingmen "Life is a farce, anyway!" I looked at the thick swarms of flies, the uneatable viands, and then at the lilies—perhaps he was right!



"To the West! to the West! to the land of the free,

Where mighty St. Lawrence rolls down to the sea,

Where the rivers that flow

Run thousands of miles, spreading out as they go, Where the green waving forests, that echo on call, Are wide as old England and free to us all, Where the prairies, like seas where the billows

Where the prairies, like seas where the billows have rolled,

Are broad as the kingdoms and empires of old, And the lakes are like oceans in storm or in rest, Away, far away, to the Land of the West!"

It was the land, not of the St. Lawrence, but the broad Fraser River of British Columbia.

The U.S.S. warship, West Virginia, had been lying off Vancouver for days in Burrard Inlet. Her long, low, slate-gray hull, crowned with its turrets and puffing smoke-stack lay athwart the water and reminded one of nothing so much as a pirate ship of old. It was at the time

previous to the rejection of the reciprocity measure by Canada and Canadians, and considerable interest and excitement was aroused in Vancouver by the appearance of this celebrated U.S.S. warship in her harbor. She had come, it was said, to test the coal of the British Columbia mines, and, the sailing trials being satisfactory, orders would be placed for Canadian coal—a very practical and satisfactory kind of reciprocity.

A certain warm July day brought out a large number of Vancouverites, and the trip was made in open boats, manned by eager oarsmen, from the wharves to the warship. One of the Canadian sightseers was accosted with the query: "Is any one showing you the ship?"—and turned to behold a young sailor marvellously like an Englishman.

He seemed a product of the wind and sea, tall and lithe, with the pink and white of an English complexion, tight, clustering golden curls and eyes as blue as the sea. His uniform was the white duck of the U.S. navy. The rest of the party was hastily collected and two short hours spent in viewing the ship, from the flying bridge—with its various nautical instruments, and brass compass surmounted by a glass ball enclosing a huge uncut sapphire—where the sailor had first appeared, to the storerooms below—containing amunition and powder, and the hard floor covered with red shellac as a varnish—which visitors are allowed to view only from the top of the companion.

There were seven decks, comprising the flying bridge, lower bridge, bridge deck, main, gun, berth and lower decks, the first and last before-mentioned. The hospital deck would have been interesting, especially to nurses or medical men, with the one or two patients in stock, provided with flowers and books—everything complete even to operating tables. On another deck could be seen sailors

making their own uniforms on sewing machines; the services of the ship's tailor could be put into requisition, however, if desired. The men slept in hammocks swung from the ceilings, the sea-breezes blowing about them. A white canvas bag was served to each to hold uniforms. The sailors were not allowed to carry baggage, and anything extra was left at ports to be called for when the West Virginia came off-shore. Here and there was stretched a sailor, sleeping. "That fellow's resting," said our easy-mannered guide, indicating him by a wave of the hand.

Here was the signal service equipment, consisting of vari-colored flags, used alike in U.S. and British navies; the wooden-armed semaphore, the ardoise, a device used only in the American service—and a special feature of the gun equipment was an aeroplane gun, turning and twisting in every direction.



The West Virginia had a history of its own, being the flagship of the Pacific Fleet, and was then commanded by Rear-Admiral Sutherland. The captain was a Christian Scientist, so we were informed, and held services himself. The ship carried a crew of eight hundred and fifty men of all ranks, with officers. As indicated by the pennants, the

ship's colors were blue and gold. Ashore, the men were uniformed like our own Jack-Tars—dark-blue, the sailor collar decorated with a black silk tie, which, to our great astonishment we learnt was worn in memory of Lord Nelson.

A most interesting little magazine, "The Ditty Box," was printed on board ship. We reprint the following extracts:

"A Trip to the Volcano of Kilauea" By M. G. Brown, Chief Yeoman

After the return of the first volcano party from the crater of Kilauea, the following oration was

delivered by an overheated shipmate:

"You ought to a seen it. Say, if Hell's like that, you and me's on the wrong trail. I aint a goen to try to tell you about it 'cause there aint no use. Youse wouldn't believe me. Is it worth seeing? Say, cut that stuff and loosen up and if you dont stand there with your mouth open you can take it from me youse has lock-jaw. Say, I hoofs it three miles over them lava beds and I says to meself if that there crarter aint what its cracked up to be you can put me down for a boob if I listen to any more of them nature fakirs trying to get gob's money. Well, I finally gets where I can see big slits 'ruptions made in the trail with steam coming outen them and I gets to thinking maybe there's something to all the big talk when I feels an awful heat in me face and smells sulphur and shades of Hades if there wasn't Hell right in front of me. You gotter see it to believe theres a hole about twenty acres big and jam full a red hot, splashing lava a spouting up in fountains all over the thing and the hull mess a moving around and kinda pouring itself into cracks and then you sees another spout a starting and it throws up that boiling hot stuff a sputtering and a splashing in

the steam and smoke 'til a fellow gets to thinking he's glad he come in the Navy or he wouldn't a seen it. Well, I says I gotter burn some post cards to send to me girl and I crawls down onter the shelf soes I could get near enough to burn some cards I puts in a gadget in the end of a stick and all the time I has me hand in front of me face to keep the heat from drying up me complexion when blow me if the wind didn't drive all that sulphur right in me face and I swallows enough to start a match factory. That guy what wrote that book when he says 'whether to advance or retreat is a problem to many' musta had no girl to burn post cards for or he wouldn't a made no such crack, 'cause what I did was abandon ship right there without a waiting for no provision call."

Wise and Otherwise.

"Did you hear the good one George Smallman tells on himself? In the performance of his duty as postmaster he found it necessary to send a notice to a Wisconsin miss that, unless postage on a package of fourth class matter was fully prepaid, it would be forwarded to the Dead Letter Office. He received the following note: "Mr. STINGY Postmaster (Your name SMALLMAN suits you alright). Just received this notice, and the two weeks are up today. I expect a silk kimona in that package, and for the sake of ONE cent you are keeping it—to give to your sister? I s'pose. Here's your old ONE cent, now get busy and send it to I——Y——, Pleasant Prairie, Wis."

Our last sight of the West Virginia was from Kitsilano Beach, Vancouver, a small nephew claiming our attention with an excited call: "Auntie, there goes the warship out to sea?" The gallant warship steamed rapidly ahead, the Stars and Stripes floating gaily from the masthead, a

long column of smoke rising from the scarlet funnel—and was soon lost to view, disappearing round a headland.

"Far out at sea, a sail
Bends to the listening breeze,
Answers the wash of the seas,
Fades from our longing sight
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."



VIII

THE HEATHEN CHINEE

The bill in arrears was the mystic sum of thirteen dollars.

There was nothing, as usual, wherewith to pay it, and disregarding the presence of the regular Chinese laundryman and boy, accompanied by a tall Oriental in the background, the dutiful Winnipeg "Hansfrau" treated her husband to a torrent of expostulation, amounting in all to this: that his attire could be replaced, while hers would require two or three years to re-construct, being of greater value and more difficult to obtain.

The tall Oriental stepped back from the group of his countrymen and enquired of the lady in emphatic tones: "Do YOU think I will get that money?"—and upon being so assured, departed with dignity and speed, followed by the other ('hinese.

Upon the customary weekly visit, the Chinaman appeared, alone.

"Where is your tall friend?"

"Gone back to China, lady—me give him the money: you give thirteen dollars to me."

Which was duly done, after a week or two of further delay—the Oriental never losing confidence in the final outcome, the thirteen dollars being placed in his hands, the reward of the word of—a good man.

SOCIETY IN CANADA

(Quoted, with apologies to the unknown author) "In Toronto, you find a friend
If only you his church attend.

"In Montreal, they want to know The amount of your bank account.

"In Vancouver, the people say:— 'Where is it from, that you have come?'

"In Rossland, they are so polite That you must either drink or fight.

"In Brandon, people merely grin, And murmur: 'When did you roll in?'

"In Winnipeg, you cut no ice— Unless, b'Jove, you've got the price."

An elderly lady, a relative of a Winnipegger, returned this poem with the remark: "I cannot see why Victoria is not mentioned. It is quite a society city, and surely it is entitled to notice quite as much as Rossland!"

The Winnipegger assented weakly, and stated, by way of further explanation, that she had no idea why Victoria was left off the list in the above interesting extract.

LA RIVIÈRE ROUGE DU NORD

"In and out the river is winding
The links of its long red chain,
Through leagues of dusky pineland
And miles of dusty plain."

Elle glissait entre des deux rivages, sa source en le Lac Itasca, dans l'Etat de Minnesota, la contrée de Minnehaha, un pays de lacs—la grande rivière du Nord.

"Is it the clang of the wild goose?

Or the sound of a far-off bell?

That strikes on the ear of the listener

Like the sound of a far-off bell?"

Les eaux sont mouillés, de boue. Pendant un jour de froid, elles font que l'on sent de mélancolie.

"The voyageur smiles as he listens,
And the oarsmen row apace,
Well he knows the vesper ringing
Of the bells of Saint Boniface!"

Les cloches de Saint Boniface, elles ont pendant de longues années sonné, à travers les eaux—les cloches de la cathédrale de Saint Boniface." "Thus, upon life's Red River,
While dreary north winds blow,
Our hearts beat time to the music,
While our hands like oarsmen row."

Le vent du Nord, il gêlait, rempli de neige et de froid.

"And so, when life's sorrow is ended And the strife and turmoil cease, May we hear in th' Eternal City -The heavenly chimes of peace."

-Whittier.

The immortal stanzas of the German poet Heine, entitled simply "Gedicht," seem not inappropriate here.

"A Pine upon a barren steep
Stands in the Nordland all alone,
Covered with ice and snow, asleep—
With a white mantle o'er him thrown.

"The Pine is dreaming of a Palm
That 'midst the glow of a tropic day,
On a burning soil, in a sultry calm,
Mourns—lone—and still—and far-away."





